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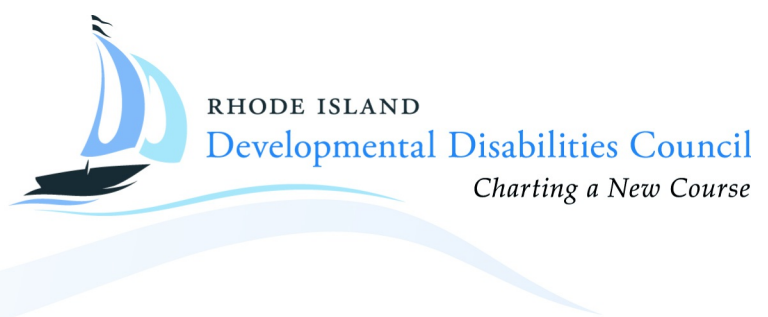
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April 30, 2026

RE: House BILL 7361 - AN ACT RELATING TO BHDDH – QUALITY SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORTS ACT OF 2026

Chair Corvese and members of the House Committee on Labor,

The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council supports efforts to improve staff recruitment/retention options for persons with I/DD that choose to self-direct their support services.

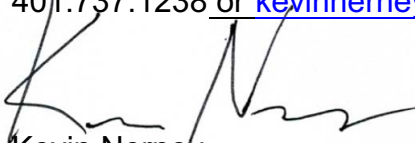
Individuals that self-direct have their funds allocated by BHDDH, based on an evaluation and level of need, placed with a fiscal intermediary rather than being assigned to a service provider or providers. They then can purchase support services by hiring staff to work directly for them and they become the employer of record for these support staff. In this way they can purchase support tailored specifically to their needs and have full control over which staff provides those services.

There has been some difficulty recruiting staff for these positions due to some of the restrictions that are in place – regarding what the compensation package that can be established under BHDDH regulations with regard to salary ranges, lack of fringe benefits, lack of workforce development, etc. As we understand it, this bill would allow for the unionization of these workers and the union would negotiate with BHDDH, EOHHS and the fiscal intermediaries to improve working conditions and compensation packages, as well as improve the recruitment possibilities for the persons that are self-directing. We would hope that it may even be possible that the union would recruit members, provide some basic training and then allow individuals that self-direct to virtually go to the union hall and hire union members that could meet their needs.

We have been working with the Union's lobbyist and Representative Shanley on the proposed changes to the bill that would put safeguards in place to avoid unintended consequences such as reduction in services due to increase in wages without complementary increases in the individual's budget from BHDDH

to purchase services they need. The Union has been very responsive to the issues the Council and individuals enrolled in the Self-Direct program have raised; so if the Sub-A includes all of the negotiated changes the Council would encourage the Committee to embrace this option for addressing the work-force development needs of the BHDDH Self Direct Program.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at any time at 401.737.1238 or kevinnerney@riddc.org.



Kevin Nerney

Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council